

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel claims 2, 3, 20-33 and 35, without prejudice, and amend claims 4-7, 10-12, 14, 15, 18, 19 and 36 as follows.

1. (Original) A tree stand comprising a fluid reservoir about a tree retaining member including tree gripping means, wherein the tree gripping means comprise at least one projection.

2. (Cancelled)

3. (Cancelled)

4. (Currently Amended) A tree stand as claimed in ~~any one of Claims 1-3~~ claim 1, wherein the tree retaining member is mounted within the fluid reservoir.

5. (Currently Amended) A tree stand as claimed in ~~any preceding~~ claim 1, wherein the tree retaining member does not substantially protrude from the cleared reservoir.

6. (Currently Amended) A tree stand as claimed in ~~any preceding~~ claim 1 wherein the fluid reservoir comprises a cylindrical or frustoconical member being closed at one end thereof, and the tree retaining member is connected to the closed end of the cylindrical or frustoconical member.

7. (Currently Amended) A tree stand as claimed in ~~any preceding~~ claim 1 wherein the tree stand further comprises a diaphragm on which is mounted a tree retaining member.

8. (Original) A tree stand as claimed in Claim 7 wherein the tree retaining member comprises an aperture within the diaphragm.

9. (Original) A tree stand as claimed in Claim 8 wherein the tree retaining member comprises a substantially cylindrical member or a substantially frustoconical member mounted within the diaphragm.

10. (Currently Amended) A tree stand as claimed in ~~any one of Claims 7-9~~ claim 7, wherein the diaphragm is arranged to be detachably connectable to the fluid reservoir, in use.

11. (Currently Amended) A tree stand as claimed in ~~any one of Claims 7-9~~ claim 7, wherein the diaphragm is immovably fixed to the fluid reservoir in use.

12. (Currently Amended) A tree stand as claimed in ~~any one of Claims 7-11~~ claim 7, wherein the diaphragm comprises a body region and an edge region.

13. (Original) A tree stand as claimed in Claim 12 wherein the edge region is arrangeable to, in use, contact an edge of the aperture of the fluid reservoir when the diaphragm is arranged with the fluid reservoir.

14. (Currently Amended) A tree stand as claimed in ~~Claims 12 & 13~~ claim 12, wherein the edge region of the diaphragm is arranged to be push fit within the aperture of the fluid reservoir.

15. (Currently Amended) A tree stand as claimed in ~~any preceding~~ claim 1, comprising tree gripping means comprising a plurality of projections arranged on the interior surface of the tree retaining member.

16. (Original) A tree stand as claimed in Claim 15 wherein the projections comprise veins running substantially axially with the tree retaining member.

17. (Original) A tree stand as claimed in Claim 16 wherein the veins are arranged to maintain a degree of separation between a tree trunk inserted into the tree stand, and portions of the interior surface of the tree retaining member.

18. (Currently Amended) A tree stand as claimed in ~~any one of Claims 15-17~~ claim 15, wherein the projections include a sharp or pointed portion arranged in use to at least partially penetrate the trunk of a tree inserted into the tree retaining member.

19. (Currently Amended) A tree stand as claimed in ~~any preceding~~ claim 1 wherein the fluid reservoir and tree retaining member are in fluid communication.

Claims 20-33. (Cancelled)

34. (Original) A method of securing a cut tree in a tree stand, the method comprising the steps of: (a) providing a tree stand comprising a fluid reservoir about a tree retaining member including tree gripping means, wherein the tree gripping means comprise at least one projection; (b) shaping a portion of the trunk of the cut tree at the cut end of the tree such that its surface dimensions are substantially identical to the interior dimensions of the tree retaining member; and (c) inserting the shaped portion of the trunk into the tree retaining member such that the tree is secured to the interior of the tree retaining member by abutment of the tree with the interior surface of the tree retaining member.

35. (Cancelled)

36. (Currently Amended) A method as claimed in ~~any one of Claims 33-35~~ claim 33 further comprising the step of adding water to the fluid reservoir.